

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 CAIRO 12625 101737Z  
ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01  
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15  
ICA-11 OMB-01 AID-05 ACDA-12 MCE-00 TRSE-00 SSM-03  
/098 W

-----061879 110358Z /21

R 101712Z MAY 78  
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8977  
INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
USMISSION SINAI  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 12625

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: MASS EG US  
SUBJECT: THE AIRCRAFT SALE: MAKING THE BEST OF A  
WORRISOME SITUATION

REFS: (A) CAIRO 12502, (B) CAIRO 11911, (C) CAIRO 11722

SUMMARY: AS DEBATE OVER AIRCRAFT SALE REACHES HALF-  
WAY POINT, EGYPTIAN PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND COMMENTARIES,  
ATTEMPTING PUT BEST LIGHT POSSIBLE ON SITUATION, DESPITE  
PRIVATE CONCERN AND SOME CONFUSION OVER U.S. PROCEDURES.  
GAMASY HEDGES BY DOWNPLAYING IMPORTANCE OF F-5  
(WHILE RULING OUT RETURN TO SOVIETS FOR ARMS).  
BOUTROS GHALI STRESSES HOW MUCH U.S. HAS CHANGED.  
EDITORIALS REPEAT THEME THAT U.S. HAS COME LONG WAY.  
PRIVATELY, OFFICIALS ARE DEEPLY APPREHENSIVE THAT  
ADMINISTRATION COMPROMISES ON AIRCRAFT PACKAGE AND  
CARTER STATEMENT THAT HE UNABLE INFLUENCE ISRAEL  
PRESAGE U.S. DISASSOCIATING ITSELF FROM INFLUENCING  
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ISRAEL. END SUMMARY.

1. OFFICIAL STATEMENTS. IN PUBLIC GOE OFFICIALS  
PUTTING BEST POSSIBLE LIGHT ON STORMY DISCUSSION OF  
AIRCRAFT SALE IN CONGRESS. MINWAR GEN. GAMASY  
PLAYED DOWN IMPORTANCE OF F-5'S FOR EGYPT, SAYING IT  
"NOT VITAL" AND WOULD HAVE ONLY "COMPLEMENTARY

ROLE." GAMASY ALSO SAID EGYPT WOULD NO LONGER TURN TO THE USSR FOR WEAPONS BECAUSE WESTERN AIRCRAFT ARE "BETTER". FOR WESTERN WEAPONS HE EXPECTS TO RELY ON WEST EUROPE (NOTABLY FRANCE) OR TO MANUFACTURE THEM THROUGH AIO. AT SAME TIME EGYPT WOULD CONTINUE ASK U.S. FOR ARMS BUT "WITHOUT OVER DOING IT" SO AS NOT TO EMBARRASS PRESIDENT CARTER. MFA MINSTATE BOUTROS GHALI, IN INTERVIEW PUBLISHED IN MISR MAY 9, CONTRASTED U.S. WILLINGNESS TO SELL FIGHTERS TO EGYPT AND SAUDI ARABIA WITH U.S. ATTITUDE IN PAST WHEN SHE IMPOSED EMBARGO EVEN ON WHEAT SALES TO EGYPT. BEFORE OCTOBER WAR U.S. BIASED TOWARD ISRAEL BUT TODAY, IN SPITE OF "ZIONIST PRESSURE", U.S. TRIES TO STRIKE BALANCE BETWEEN ARABS AND ISRAEL. GHALI COMMENTED THAT USSR COULD NOT PRESERVE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH EGYPT BECAUSE "IT DID NOT RESPOND TO EGYPT'S ARMS REQUIREMENTS BEFORE OR AFTER OCTOBER WAR.

2. PRESS. PRESS REPORTING ON TESTIMONY HAS HIGHLIGHTED IMPORTANCE OF SALES TO U.S. INTERESTS AND USG'S DETERMINATION TO STAND FIRM. AHRAH MAY 10 REPORTS VANCE SAYING CARTER WOULD NOT CHANGE "BASIC PROPOSALS" ON AIRCRAFT DEAL. HOWEVER, AS REPORTED EARLIER (REF A), INDICATIONS THAT COMMROMISE IS POSSIBLE CONTINUE TO SURFACE. IN DIIFERENT FRONT PAGE STORY, AHRAH GIVES FLAVOR OF STRONG OPPOSITION TO SALE BY JEWISH GROUPS  
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BY REPORTING MARK SIEGAL'S ATTACK ON BRZEZINSKI AS AUTHOR OF AIRCRAFT DEAL. BRZEZINSKI ACCUSED BY SIEGAL OF DELIBERATELY BRINGING ABOUT CONFRONTATION WITH JEWISH GROUPS OVER SALE IN ORDER TO DEFEAT THEM DECISIVELY. AKHBAR MAY 10 EDITORIAL ENTITLED "THE TIED DEAL" POINTS OUT DEALING WITH U.S. IS MORE COMPLICATED THAN DEALING WITH COMMUNIST COUNTRIES BECAUSE U.S. IS DEMOCRACY. CARTER CONSIDERS DEAL TEST OF HIS AND U.S. PRESTIGE IN ARAB WORLD. BEEORE CARTER, DISCUSSION OF AIRCRAAT SALES TO EGYPT AND SAUDI ARABIA WOULD HAVE BEEN IMPOSSIBLE.

3. PRIVATE COMMENTS: IN TYPICAL COMMENT FROM RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL, MMA DIRECTOR INT'L ORGS DEPT AMRE MOUSSA TOLD POLCOUNS MAY 10 THAT HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES FELT "GREAT UNEASE" OVER AMERICAN POSITION ON A/C SALE. WHAT THEY READ IN U.S. PRESS SUGGESTS CARTER GREATLY WEAKENED DESPITE PANAMA CANAL VICTORY AND ZIONISTS "OUT TO GET HIM." EGYPTIANS, HE SAID, ARE APPREHENSIVE ABOUT ADMINISTRATION'S "RETREAT" ON (A) DISASSEMBLING AIRCRAFT PACKAGE AND (B) REPORTEDLY PROVIDING ADDITIONAL --15'S TO ISRAEL AS PRICE FOR

PASSAGE. MOST DAMAGING OF ALL, MOUSSA SAID, WAS TRUDY  
FELDMAN'S ARTICLE, PARTICULARLY LAST PARAGRAPH IN WHICH  
PRESIDENT QUOTED AS SAYING HE DOES NOT HAVE CAPACITY TO  
INFLUENCE ISRAEL. ACCORDING MOUSSA THERE IS  
FEAR THIS STATEMENT REPRESENTS A "MODEST BEGINNING"  
BY CARTER TO DISASSOCIATE HIMSELF FROM ATTEMPTING  
INFLUENCE ISRAEL. MOUSSA SAID HE RECOGNIZED  
FELDMAN LITTLE KNOWN JOURNALIST AND INTERVIEW GIVEN  
ON OCCASION ISRAEL'S 30TH ANNIVERSARY AND THIS IS  
LINE HE USED WITH LOCAL JOURNALISTS. HE ADDED MOST  
EMPHATICALLY THAT IF THIS STATEMENT WAS REPEATED BY  
PRESIDENT TO A RESPECTED JOURNALIST, IT WOULD BE  
"CALAMITOUS". EILTS

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## Message Attributes

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**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
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**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
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